

Message Text

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ACTION SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6179

S E C R E T CAIRO 8650

STADIS/NOFORN////////////////////////////////////

EYES ONLY FOR UNDER SECRETARY SISCO FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS EG

SUBJECT: NIMBUS STREAM

REF: SECDEF SPECAT EXCLUSIVE 3501 (DTG 212337 AUG 75)

1. YOU WILL RECALL OUR DISCUSSION OF BOB ELLSWORTH'S CONCERNS ABOUT NIMBUS STREAM AS SET FORTH REFTEL TO YOU. HER ARE THE COMMENTS I PROMISED YOU FOR YOUR POSSIBLE USE IN YOUR DISCUSSIONS WITH ELLSWORTH:
2. I SHARE ELLSWORTH'S VIEW THAT A CLEAR DISTINCTION SHOULD BE MADE BETWEEN MINESWEEPING AND MINE CLEARANCE. ADMIRAL ZIKRY'S VIEWS NOTWITHSTANDING, WE HAVE FROM THE OUTSET MADE THIS DISTINCTION AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO. WE SEE NO REASON, HOWEVER, WHY WE CANNOT ALSO GIVE EGYPTIAN NAVY MODEST TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SO THAT IT CAN DO THE FOLLOW-UP CLEARANCE ACTIIVITIES.
3. EGYPTIAN DESIRE TO CLEAR COMPLETELY MINES IN THE PORT SAID AREA IS UNDERSTANDABLE AND WE SHOULD SUPPORT ANY REASONABLE EFFORT THEY MAY WISH TO MAKE TO ACCOMPLISH THIS OBJECTIVE. FAILURE TO DO SO WILL NEGATE THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF NIMBUS STREAM. OUR MINESWEEPING HELICOPTER OPERATIONS ARE AN ESSENTIAL BEGINNING, BUT EMBASSY CAIRO HAS ALWAYS POINTED OUT THAT WE SHOULD ALSO

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BE PREPARED TO ASSIST EGYPTIAN NAVY IN ITS FOLLOW-UP

MISSION.

4. IN MY VIEW, WE SHOULD BE PREPARED TO LOAN TO THE EGYPTIAN NAVY NECESSARY TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT TO DO THE JOB AND ALSO TO PROVIDE NECESSARY TRAINING. IF OUR EQUIPMENT REQUIRES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, WE SHOULD CONSIDER GIVING THIS. ACTUAL MINE CLEARANCE OPERATIONS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED BY EGYPTIAN MINESWEEPERS MANNED BY EGYPTIAN CREWS AND ASSISTED BY EGYPTIAN EOD PERSONNEL. THERE MAY OR MAY NOT BE NEED FOR US TECHNICIANS -- CIVILIAN OR NAVAL PERSONNEL -- TO BE ABOARD THE EGYPTIAN MINE-SWEEPERS DURING THE CLEARANCE OPERATIONS. THIS WILL BE A FUNCTION OF HOW THOROUGH AND SUCCESSFUL A TRAINING PROGRAM CAN BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IF THE MINE-FIELD TO BE CLEARED HAS BEEN SWEEPED TO AN ADEQUATE DEGREE OF SAFETY ASSUREANCE, THERE OUGHT TO BE NO RPT NO OBJECTIONS ON OUR PART TO PERMITTING A SMALL NUMBER OF AMERICAN TECHNICIANS TO EMBARK ABOARD THE EGYPTIAN SHIPS TO ASSIST IN OPERATING AND MAINTAINING THE MINE DETECTION NAVIGATION EQUIPMENT TEMPORARILY INSTALLED IN THESE SHIPS. I HAVE BEEN INFORMED BY OUR MINE CLEARING EXPERTS THAT THE DEGREE OF HAZARD TO WHICH THESE PERSONNEL WOULD BE EXPOSED IN THE ABOVE CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD BE CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN THAT TO WHICH OUR MINE COUNTERMEASURES HELICOPTER CREWS ARE NOW EXPOSED.

5. I DISAGREE WITH ELLSWORTH'S IDEA OF SWEEPING ONLY THE TWO SHALLOW FIELDS ADJACENT TO THE PORT SAID HARBOR ENTRANCE. THIS IS NOT WHAT WE AGREED TO DO AND ANY SUCH SUGGESTION WILL BE BADLY RECEIVED HERE. NOR IS IT A REALISTIC COURSE OF ACTION FROM A PRACTICAL POINT OF VIEW. THESE FIELDS WERE LAID IN 1969 AND ARE PROBABLY NO LONGER ACTIVE. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NOW BEEN SWEEPING ONLY A WEEK, NO DETONATIONS HAVE BEEN REPORTED FROM SWEEPING ACCOMPLISHED IN THESE FIELDS THUS FAR. NONE IN FACT HAS BEEN ANTICIPATED. SINCE I AM TOLD BY EXPERTS THAT IT IS MOST UNLIKELY THAT THE BATTERIES IN THE MINES COULD LAST FOR SIX YEARS, TERMINATING US SWEEPING OPERATIONS AFTER SWEEPING TWO PROBABLY INERT FIELDS, AND HAVING EXPERIENCED

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ZERO DETONATIONS, WOULD BE INTERPRETED BY THE EGYPTIANS AS A BREACH OF FAITH. THE SOVIETS, WHO ARE MOST DISTURBED ABOUT OUR DOING THIS JOB, WOULD BE PLEASED, BUT WOULD ALSO CAST IT AS EVIDENCE OF OUR LACK OF CAPABILITY AND LACK OF GOOD FAITH. IT WOULD BE DEMORALIZING TO OUR OWN PEOPLE WHO HAVE WORKED HARD TO ESTABLISH A CAPABILITY WHICH THEY ARE NOW ON THE VERGE OF DEMONSTRATING. THE FAVORABLE IMPRESSION MADE BY USN PREVIOUSLY IN

EGYPT WOULD BE AT LEAST PARTIALLY HURT. THE EGYPTIANS ADMIT THEIR LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THEIR ORGANIC ABILITY TO SUCCESSFULLY SWEEP THESE FIELDS AND WOULD BE RELUCTANT TO TAKE A CHANCE ON THEIR OWN. THEY WOULD HAVE TO LOOK ELSE WHERE FOR HELP, PROBABLY TO THE BRITISH, FRENCH OR SOVIETS. THE SOVIETS HAVE INDICATED THEY WOULD DO THE JOB FOR NOTHING.

6. WE ARE INFORMED THAT CTF-65 CAN SWEEP ALL FIVE FIELDS PRIOR TO THE ONSET OF BAD WEATHER ABOUT MID-NOVEMBER. THE SOLE QUESTION IS HOW THOROUGH THE SWEEPING WILL BE. WE HERE FAVOR SWEEPING ALL FIELDS TO SHIP COUNTER SETTING 21. IF THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE, WE SHOULD SWEEP ALL FIELDS AS THOROUGHLY AS POSSIBLE IN THE TIME AVAILABLE, TRY TO COMPLETE THE JOB THIS FALL, EXPLAIN IT ADEQUATELY TO THE EGYPTIANS, AND THEN LEAVE.

7. WE ALSO NEED AN EARLY RESOLUTION OF THE QUESTION OF WHETHER MINE CLEARANCE EQUIPMENT CAN BE LOANED TO THE EGYPTIAN NAVY. THE RELATED QUESTIONS OF SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF EQUIPMENT AND MANUALS, AND TRAINING OF EGYPTIAN PERSONNEL, LIKEWISE REQUIRE EXPEDITIOUS ANSWERS.

8. I AGREE THAT THE USG SHOULD NOT CERTIFY THE AREA SAFE FOR NAVIGATION, ALTHOUGH I SEE NO REASON WHY WE CANNOT PROVIDE AN ORAL SUMMARY OF MINESWEEPING OPERATIONS CONDUCTED I CALLED UPON TO DO SO. THIS WOULD BE SIMILAR TO WHAT WE DID IN THE CASE OF THE SUEZ CANAL OPERATIONS.
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